

Episode Fifty-Eight - The Mind's Direct Receipt of Images

Post by “Cassius” of February 13, 2021 at 10:07 AM

Welcome to Episode Fifty-Eight of Lucretius Today.

I am your host Cassius, and together with my panelists from the EpicureanFriends.com forum, we'll walk you through the six books of Lucretius' poem, and discuss how Epicurean philosophy can apply to you today. We encourage you to study Epicurus for yourself, and we suggest the best place to start is the book, "Epicurus and His Philosophy" by Canadian professor Norman DeWitt.

For anyone who is not familiar with our podcast, please check back to [Episode One](#) for a discussion of our goals and our ground rules. If you have any question about that, please be sure to contact us at Epicureanfriends.com for more information.

Podcast 58 - The Mind's Direct Receipt of Images

Latin Lines 722 - 822

Munro Notes

722-748: the mind too receives its impressions from images flying about on all hands, which however are much finer than those by which we see: images are of different kinds, some formed spontaneously in the air, some coming from things or formed from a union of several ; and thus we see centaurs and the like, though such never existed, from the chance union for instance of the image of a man and horse; the extreme fineness of such images makes them readily unite, and the wondrous agility of the mind itself at once receives them.

749-776: so far as what the mind sees resembles what the eye sees, their causes must be like: now the lion we see in mind is the same we see with the eyes, both therefore are seen by images: and thus in sleep we see, for instance one who is dead, by images coming to the mind; the senses and memory being then inactive and not able to detect the absurdity: again images move as we see them in sleep, merely because some are coming others going every instant, so that they appear to be the same in different postures.

777-817: this question offers many difficulties: why does a man think of whatever he wishes to think, sea or earth or sky? while others in the same place have quite other thoughts: why too in sleep are these images seen to move rhythmically? are they forsooth trained by art? or is it that

in the least sensible time many times are latent, in which many images can appear? the mind again, like the eye, in order to see must often attend and exert itself, else they will pass unheeded: again the mind adds many false inferences to what is seen.

818-822 (826): sometimes too a woman will change to a man, or the like, but in sleep we do not perceive the incongruity.

Browne 1743

And now attend, and observe in short, what things affect the mind, and from whence proceed those objects that make an impression upon it. First then, I say that subtle images of things, a numerous train of them, wander about in every way and in various manners. These, as they meet, easily twine and are joined together in the air, as threads of gold or the web of a spider; for these are much finer in their contexture than those images that strike the eye and move the sight. These pierce through the pores of the body and move the subtle nature of the mind within, and affect the sense. Hence it is that we see Centaurs, and the limbs of Scylla's, and the heads of Cerberus, and the shadows of those who have long since been dead, and whose bones are rotting in the grave; because images of all kinds are ever wandering about; some of their own accord are formed in the air, some are continually flying off from various bodies, and others rise from these images mixed together. For it is certain that the image of a Centaur never flowed from one that was alive; for there was never such an animal in nature, but when the image of a horse met by chance with the image of a man, it immediately stuck to it, which it easily does, by reason of the subtlety of its nature and the fineness of its texture; and all other monstrous figures are formed after the same manner. These images being exceeding light, and easily put in motion (as I observed before) each of them affects the mind at one stroke; for the mind is of a very subtle nature, and wonderfully disposed to move.

That the mind is moved, as I observed, by the images of things, you may easily collect from hence, that what we perceive by the mind is exactly like what we see with our eyes, and therefore they must of necessity be both affected by the same things, and in the same manner. And so, when I said, for instance, that I see a lion by means of the image that strikes upon the eyes, I know by the same rule that the mind is moved by another image of a lion, which it equally and no less sees, than the eye sees the image proper to it; with this difference only, that the mind can perceive images of a more thin and subtle nature.

Nor from any other reason is the mind awake when the body is asleep, but because those very images affect the mind which were used to move the sense when we were awake, so that we fully believe we see a person who has been long since dead and buried in the grave; and it cannot well be otherwise, because all the senses of the body are obstructed and bound up by sleep, and therefore have no power to convince us of the contrary. Besides, the memory is feeble and languishes by rest, and makes no objection to satisfy us, that the man has been long in the arms of death, whom the mind really believes it sees alive.

And then it is no wonder that the images seem to move, and to throw their arms and the rest of their limbs to exact time, and thus they seem to do when we are in a dream, for when the first image is gone, and another springs up in a different posture, the first, we think, has changed its shape; and all this, you must conceive, is done in an instant of time. There are many other inquiries about things of this nature and we must enter into long disputes if we attempt to give a distinct answer to every one.

First then, it is asked, How is it that whatever we desire to think of the mind immediately thinks upon that very thing? Is it that the images are always ready at the command of the will? Does the image immediately occur to us the moment we desire? If we fancy to think of the sea, the earth, the heavens, of senates, shows, feasts, battles, does nature form these and provide them ready at our nod? Especially since the minds of others, that are in the same country and in the same place with us, think things quite different from these? And then, since we see images in our sleep to step to time, to move their pliant limbs, and throw about their tender arms alternately, and keep due measure with their feet, are they taught this by Art? Have they learnt to dance, that thus they play their wanton sports by night? Is not this the truth rather, that what we take for one moment of time, this present Now, has many parts included, as we find by reason? And therefore it is that in every instant there are a thousand different images always ready in every place, so numerous are they, and so apt to move; and then they are so exceeding subtle, that the mind cannot possibly perceive them distinctly, without the nicest diligence. And so those images die away unobserved, which the mind does not apply itself to receive, but it does apply itself closely to distinguish the image it hopes to find, and therefore sees it.

Don't you observe that the eyes, when they would discover an object exceeding small, contract themselves close and provide for it, nor can they accurately distinguish, except they do so? And you will find, even in things ever so plain, unless you strictly apply your mind, they will be as if they were utterly obscure, and at the greatest distance undiscovered. Where is the wonder then that the mind should lose the observation of all other images but those it particularly inquires after and is employed about? Besides, we often mistake small objects for great, and so we contribute to our own delusion and impose upon ourselves. It happens likewise that sometimes an image of a different kind presents itself to the mind. Thus the form that was before a woman now shows itself a man, or some other person of a different age and complexion, but this we are not to wonder at, since the senses are all asleep, and we are wholly in a state of forgetfulness.

Munro 1886

Now mark, and hear what things move the mind, and learn in a few words whence the things which come into it do come. I say first of all, that idols of things wander about many in number in many ways in all directions round, extremely thin; and these when they meet, readily unite, like a cobweb or piece of gold-leaf. For these idols are far thinner in texture than those which take possession of the eyes and provoke vision; since these enter in through the porous parts

of the body and stir the fine nature of the mind within and provoke sensation. Therefore we see Centaurs and limbs of Scyllas and Cerberus-like faces of dogs and idols of those who are dead, whose bones earth holds in its embrace; since idols of every kind are everywhere borne about, partly those which are spontaneously produced within the air, partly all those which withdraw from various things and those which are formed by compounding the shapes of these. For assuredly no image of Centaur is formed out of a live one, since no such nature of living creature ever existed; but when images of a horse and a man have by chance come together, they readily adhere at once, as we said before, on account of their fine nature and thin texture. All other things of the kind are produced in like fashion. And when these from extreme lightness are borne on with velocity, as I showed before, any one subtle composite image you like readily moves the mind by a single stroke; for the mind is fine and is itself wondrously nimble.

That all this is done as I relate you may easily learn from what follows. So far as the one is like another, seeing with the mind and seeing with the eyes must be produced in a like way. Well then since I have shown that I perceive for instance a lion by means of idols which provoke the eyes, you may be sure that the mind is moved in a like way, which by means of idols sees a lion or anything else just as well as the eyes, with this difference that it perceives much thinner idols. And when sleep has prostrated the body, for no other reason does the mind's intelligence wake, except because the very same idols provoke our minds which provoke them when we are awake, and to such a degree that we seem without a doubt to perceive him whom life has left and death and earth gotten hold of. This nature constrains to come to pass because all the senses of the body are then hampered and at rest throughout the limbs and cannot refute the unreal by real things. Moreover memory is prostrate and relaxed in sleep and protests not that he has long been in the grasp of death and destruction whom the mind believes it sees alive. Furthermore it is not strange that idols move and throw about their arms and other limbs in regular measure: for sometimes in sleep an image is seen to do this: when the first to wit has gone and a second then been born in another posture, that former one seems to have altered its attitude. This remember you must assume to take place with exceeding celerity: so great is the velocity, so great the store of things; so great in any one unit of time that sense can seize is the store of particles, out of which the supply may go on.

And here many questions present themselves and many points must be cleared up by us, if we desire to give a plain exposition of things. The first question is why, when the wish has occurred to any one to think of a thing, his mind on the instant thinks of that very thing. Do idols observe our will, and so soon as we will does an image present itself to us, if sea, if earth, ay or heaven is what we wish? Assemblies of men, a procession, feasts, battles, everything in short does nature at command produce and provide? And though to increase the marvel the mind of others in the same spot and room is thinking of things all quite different. What again are we to say, when we see in sleep idols advance in measured tread and move their pliant limbs, when in nimble wise they put out each pliant arm in turn and represent to the eyes over and over again an action with foot that moves in time? Idols to wit are imbued with art and move about well-trained, to be able in the night-time to exhibit such plays. Or will this rather be the truth?

Because in one unit of time, when we can perceive it by sense and while one single word is uttered, many latent times are contained which reason finds to exist, therefore in any time you please all the several idols are at hand ready prepared in each several place. And because they are so thin, the mind can see distinctly only those which it strains itself to see; therefore all that there are besides are lost, save only those for which it has made itself ready. Moreover, it makes itself ready and hopes to see that which follows upon each thing; therefore the result does follow. Do you not see that the eyes also, when they essay to discern things which are thin and fine, strain themselves and make themselves ready, and without that we cannot see distinctly? And yet you may observe even in things which are plain before us, that if you do not attend, it is just as if the thing were all the time away and far distant? What wonder then, if the mind loses all other things save those with which it is itself earnestly occupied? Then too from small indications we draw the widest inferences and by our own fault entangle ourselves in the meshes of self-delusion.

Sometimes it happens too that an image of the same kind is not supplied, but what before was a woman, turns out in our hands to have changed into a man; or a different face and age succeed to the first. But sleep and forgetfulness prevent us from feeling surprise at this.

Bailey 1921

Come now, let me tell you what things stir the mind, and learn in a few words whence come the things which come into the understanding. First of all I say this, that many idols of things wander about in many ways in all directions on every side, fine idols, which easily become linked with one another in the air, when they come across one another's path, like spider's web and gold leaf. For indeed these idols are far finer in their texture than those which fill the eyes and arouse sight, since these pierce through the pores of the body and awake the fine nature of the mind within, and arouse its sensation. And so we see Centaurs and the limbs of Scyllas, and the dog-faces of Cerberus and idols of those who have met death, and whose bones are held in the embrace of earth; since idols of every kind are borne everywhere, some which are created of their own accord even in the air, some which depart in each case from diverse things, and those again which are made and put together from the shapes of these. For in truth the image of the Centaur comes not from a living thing, since there never was the nature of such a living creature, but when by chance the images of man and horse have met, they cling together readily at once, as we have said ere now, because of their subtle nature and fine fabric. All other things of this kind are fashioned in the same way. And when they move nimbly with exceeding lightness, as I have shown ere now, any one such subtle image stirs their mind; for the mind is fine and of itself wondrous nimble.

That these things come to pass as I tell, you may easily learn from this. Inasmuch as the one is like the other, what we see with the mind, and what we see with the eyes, they must needs be created in like manner. Now, therefore, since I have shown that I see a lion maybe, by means of idols, which severally stir the eyes, we may know that the mind is moved in like manner, in that it sees a lion and all else neither more nor less than the eyes, except that it sees finer idols.

And when sleep has relaxed the limbs, the understanding of the mind is for no other cause awake, but that these same idols stir our minds then, as when we are awake, insomuch that we seem surely to behold even one who has quitted life, and is holden by death and the earth. This nature constrains to come to pass just because all the senses of the body are checked and at rest throughout the limbs, nor can they refute the falsehood by true facts. Moreover, the memory lies at rest, and is torpid in slumber, nor does it argue against us that he, whom the understanding believes that it beholds alive, has long ago won to death and doom. For the rest, it is not wonderful that the idols should move and toss their arms and their other limbs in rhythmic time. For it comes to pass that the image in sleep seems to do this; inasmuch as when the first image passes away and then another comes to birth in a different posture, the former seems then to have changed its gesture. And indeed we must suppose that this comes to pass in quick process: so great is the speed, so great the store of things, so great, in any one instant that we can perceive, the abundance of the little parts of images, whereby the supply may be continued.

And in these matters many questions are asked, and there are many things we must make clear, if we wish to set forth the truth plainly. First of all it is asked why, whatever the whim may come to each of us to think of, straightway his mind thinks of that very thing. Do the idols keep watch on our will, and does the image rise up before us, as soon as we desire, whether it pleases us to think of sea or land or sky either? Gatherings of men, a procession, banquets, battles, does nature create all things at a word, and make them ready for us? And that when in the same place and spot the mind of others is thinking of things all far different. What, again, when in sleep we behold idols dancing forward in rhythmic measure, and moving their supple limbs, when alternately they shoot out swiftly their supple arms, and repeat to the eyes a gesture made by the feet in harmony? Idols in sooth are steeped in art and wander about trained to be able to tread their dance in the nighttime. Or will this be nearer truth? Because within a single time, which we perceive, that is, when a single word is uttered, many times lie unnoted, which reasoning discovers, therefore it comes to pass that in any time however small the several idols are there ready at hand in all the several spots. So great is the speed, so great the store of things. Therefore when the first image passes away and then another comes to birth in a different posture, the former seems then to have changed its gesture. Again, because they are fine, the mind cannot discern them sharply, save those which it strains to see; therefore all that there are besides these pass away, save those for which it has made itself ready. Moreover, the mind makes itself ready, and hopes it will come to pass that it will see what follows upon each several thing; therefore it comes to be. Do you not see the eyes too, when they begin to perceive things which are fine, strain themselves and make themselves ready, and that without that it cannot come to pass that we see things sharply? And yet even in things plain to see you might notice that, if you do not turn your mind to them, it is just as if the thing were sundered from you all the time, and very far away. How then is it strange, if the mind loses all else, save only the things to which it is itself given up? Then too on small signs we base wide opinions, and involve ourselves in the snare of self-deceit.

It happens too that from time to time an image of different kind rises before us, and what was before a woman, seems now to have become a man before our very eyes, or else one face or age follows after another. But that we should not think this strange, sleep and its forgetfulness secure.

Post by “Cassius” of February 19, 2021 at 8:14 PM

Episode Fifty-Eight of the Lucretius Today Podcast is now available. In today's podcast we will discuss the mind's direct receipt of images. There is some challenging material here on imagination and memory and whether / how the mind stores images, so be sure to let us know your questions and comments in the thread below.

<https://www.spreaker.com/episode/43552841>

Post by “Cassius” of February 19, 2021 at 8:40 PM

As I was editing and posting this episode it occurred to me that it would be a good idea to point out that our discussion contained elements that some people (maybe even me) are going to question. You will want to pay special attention to at least the following:

- 1 - Is the phenomenon being discussed here limited to, or primarily about, "imagination"?
- 2 - At the end of the episode it is stated that the mind does not store images, but patterns.

I think we all agreed that what is under discussion here is the mind's direct receipt of images from outside itself, without going through the eyes, but beyond that conclusions to be drawn seem to me to be challenging, to say the least.

Listen for these issues and I think you will see why we'll probably want to discuss them further.

Post by “Julia” of May 18, 2024 at 6:38 AM

This episode discusses how “images” enter the mind; it does a good job at to deciphering what our dear poet meant, however it falls a bit short in taking into account something I now consider a fact (until sufficient proof convinces me I'm wrong, in which case I shall happily change my mind):

In some ways, ancient minds worked considerably different from ours.

On one hand, there's computer-assisted archeology to back this up; here's a pop-sci [TED talk](#) which does a very good job at explaining it. Please do watch it to understand this post. On the other hand, there's what we can extrapolate from people who grew up among animals (“feral children”): they will not only behave like the animals they grew up with (in terms of locomotion, facial and vocal expression, food, social behaviours, ...), but will also (as far as can be told) think how the animals think to a large degree, and in either case will be unable to “become normal” after a certain age (unable to acquire speech, to use tools, ...). Then there's what we can extrapolate from people who grew up in various shades of isolation (criminal neglect, human trafficking, ...): During the respective [critical period](#) many behaviours can be instilled into them, making them extremely complacent, highly dissociative, or otherwise “useful” to their offenders. And finally, there is what we can extrapolate from solitary confinement (isolation of adults): Otherwise healthy humans will start to develop odd idiosyncratic behaviours, such as naming objects and speaking to them as if they were human, speaking out loud to imaginary friends or memories of friends (in psychology, this is called a fictive heterodialogue); if they have a TV, they might consider recurring TV actors / show hosts to be their friends; with increasing sensory isolation, pseudo-hallucinations (hallucinations which are recognised as being unreal) will begin to appear.

I can assert the truth in Martin Buber's statement that “The human self forms in encountering another self“, as I know even the extension to be true: Without another self, one's self dissolves. We need another self to define our boundaries, and we need interactions, more specifically, we need conscious *reactions* (mechanical/mindless reactions won't do) to define our content (what the self is filled with; our values and ultimately our identity; the who-I-am as opposed to the where-I-begin/end). In such a situation, drawing on fictive heterodialogues helps slow this dissolution immensely. The more progressed it is, the more malleable we become – no matter whether out of our own will, out of someone else's will, or out of our subconscious drive to adapt and survive. The older we are, the lesser these effects will be, but I'm quite certain they never fully vanish. Without the non-stop reality testing provided through social interaction (next time you speak to a friend, casually sprinkle in a most outlandish statement to see it in action), with increasing time/intensity, our thoughts can go off in all kinds of directions. We know this effect to be true not just for individuals, but for relatively isolated groups of people, too, as is illustrated in the Salem Witch Trials, the people of the Easter Island who (possibly) caused their own extinction by logging trees for cultish purposes, or the North Sentinelese, who collectively fear foreign humans very, very much; what they all have in common, is that the “hive mind” of those groups of people is isolated and cannot readily interact with outside “hive

minds” to do a reality test, leaving the entire group prone to diverge further and further what is real – even to their own peril. We can find similar reasons (isolation, ...) for other irrational convictions (such as [cargo cults](#)), in [groupthink](#) phenomena, and in modern-day algorithmic [filter bubbles](#).^[1]

Now, to circle back: All of this shows the immense plasticity of the human mind and the overwriting influence of culture on it, and while Ancient Greeks did not live in utter isolation, their groups (eg minor islands) were sometimes much more isolated compared to the ubiquitous global communication of today. Together with the statistical computer-linguistic proof (→ TED talk referenced above) it is therefore fair to think of Lucretius' explanation of “images” like that: Epicurus' model tried to explain the “images” without having as introspective a mind as we have (but he already had much more introspection than Homer); the “images” would therefore have felt more like pseudo-hallucinations to him, which explains why they were of such importance to begin with, and why they required such careful, detailed explanation: to clarify that they're not messages sent to us from Olympian Gods, or muses. At the same time, they couldn't have come from “his own mind”, because they felt distinctly foreign (like nightmarish fever dreams do), possibly even ego-dystonic at times, and he didn't necessarily *conjure* them up *consciously*, rather they might have *happened* to him in a *subconscious* manner.

Quick thought 1: This might also be why the geometricians were so happy to adopt the idea of a plane of ideal forms – they might have experienced such a plane, when pseudo-hallucinating geometric shapes after having spent all week drawing figures in the sand...

Quick thought 2: The introspective mind being a new development then might be why, personally, I feel as though their writings are somehow clearer, fresher, less cluttered – without two millennia of introspective cultural baggage, were their minds less tainted from the many layers of paint that are glossed over our selves, having grown up in modern society?

[1] Footnote: The lack of reality testing in the relatively isolated filter bubbles are the explosives at the core of the bombs that are so-called “social networks”; dangerous, but not by itself. The fuse to light it up is to be found in the imperative to generate an income, hence grow the user-base and absorb as much user-attention as possible (to sell ads) – this is achieved by designing apps such that they bypass the evolutionarily new, thinking parts of our brains, and instead speak more directly to our evolutionarily older, more primitive, instinct-driven, emotion-based brains.^[2] It is these “back brains” which do irrational things such as scroll through Facebook at 3am on a week day or get hooked on five hours of video footage from the deep oceans. The two characteristics are biologically related: by designing an app which gets people hooked, they have to design an app which bypasses the rational, thinking brain, and by bypassing that, the users stop reality-testing what they just saw. Without reality testing what

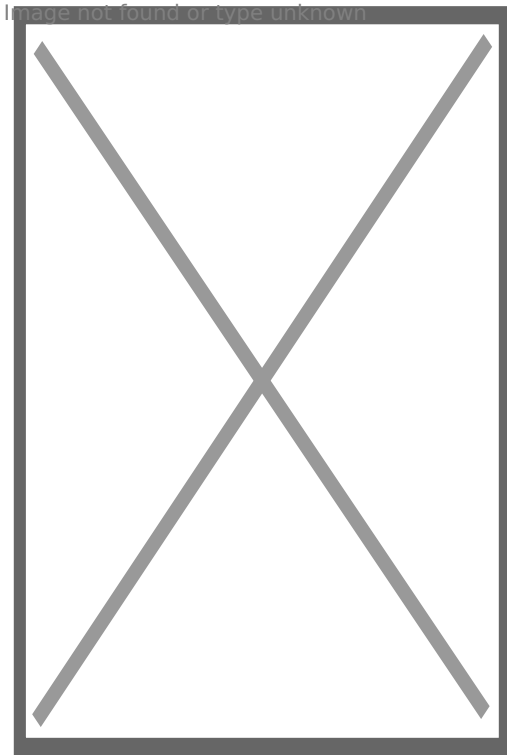
they saw, they are easily drawn into the parallel world of a filter bubble, which is algorithmically isolated, and thus self-sustaining. Ultimately, this leads to a fragmentation of society along the lines of these filter bubbles, hence to the inability of the society's "hive mind" to form a consensus (the "hive mind" is fragmented), which in turn can more easily lead to civil unrest (the same effect - trying to reach a society-wide consensus without all social groups having a say in it - is what brought about the French revolution).

[2] Footnote to Footnote: We all know this "back brain" effect: When our neighbour rings our bell in the middle of the night yelling "Fire!", we'll get out immediately - our "back brain" acted instinctively to save our life. Only once we're out on the street does our "front brain" realise: "I cannot see any fire. There's no smoke. No smoke alarms went off, either. My neighbour's eyes look suspiciously red and glassy. He's known to be a junkie. This was a false alarm, and, darn it, I forgot my keys!" We also know it as an "auto pilot" effect, which can be specially intense when we're too tired to engage in conscious thought or when we're in a particularly stressful event (such as immediately after an accident).

Post by "TauPhi" of May 18, 2024 at 7:58 AM

Very interesting post [Julia](#) . Thank you.

It reminded me about a book I meant to read but never had. I can't vouch for it as the theory presented there is highly speculative and hasn't been really put to any reliable tests, (to my knowledge - I might be wrong as I'm writing without any recent research on the topic), but based on your post I'm guessing you might want to check it out, if you're unfamiliar with it.



[The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind - Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org)
en.wikipedia.org

Post by “Cassius” of May 18, 2024 at 7:59 AM

Lots of good material there I want to think about. In the meantime as to whether the ancients saw gods, my general suspicion is that Epicurus probably didn't think they did either, and the images theory was a more general outgrowth of atomism, meant to explain the way the senses work, rather than focused on excusing hallucinations - I suspect if someone came to Epicurus in 300 BC and told him they had seen a god in their front yard that Epicurus would have considered that person just as unreliable as if someone told me that today.

Post by “Julia” of May 18, 2024 at 8:13 AM

Thank you TauPhi 😊

I know the Bicameral Mind; it has some truth to it, and gets quite close to reality in many regards, but some aspects are left out or are somewhat wrong (which is to say: just like almost every publication, the Bicameral Mind shouldn't be seen as an absolute, but merely as one step closer towards how things really are. One of the few pieces of writing which tend to describe absolute truths is my Things I Forgot While Shopping list 😊). If you want to extend your reading surrounding such topics, I'd recommend the [Dialogic Self](#) as well as reading a bit about dissociative minds, such as seen in (Partial) Dissociative Identity (which is very different from, and in fact could be seen as a polar opposite of schizophrenia). One thing I especially reject is the characterisation as bicameral minds being non-consciousness; rather, they should be characterised as being largely, but not fully non-introspective.

Post by “Julia” of May 18, 2024 at 8:19 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

the images theory was a more general outgrowth of atomism, meant to explain the way the senses work, rather than focused on excusing hallucinations

There are several types of “images”: There is what the physical eyes can see. There is what the mind's eye can see *upon* making the conscious choice to do so (what we now call imagination). There is what the mind's eye can see *without* making the conscious choice to do so (what we now call intrusive thoughts, flashbacks, etc). And finally there are dreams. Because Ancient Greeks might have involuntarily seen pictures seen in their mind's eye, which they knew are not real (pseudo-hallucinations), there was a requirement to explain where those came from: they didn't come from the mind (because they were involuntary), they didn't come from reality. So they must have been “floating around” because their “particles are very fine and smooth” and happened to get themselves attached to the mind's eye by chance.

Post by “Cassius” of May 18, 2024 at 8:39 AM

Right the mind's direct reception of images is the really interesting aspect of the theory. I don't have a strongly preferred interpretation but I don't write it off as nonsense either.

Post by “TauPhi” of May 18, 2024 at 9:23 AM

[Quote from Julia](#)

One of the few pieces of writing which tend to describe absolute truths is my Things I Forgot While Shopping list 😊).

Firstly, I'm stealing this line from you.

Secondly, I'm laughing at it as I was forced to drink unsweetened tea this morning because I'd forgotten to buy some honey yesterday. I guess making shopping lists wouldn't be the worst idea in the world. Yet, my perverse, introspective mind likes 'Things I Forgot While Shopping' list so much better.

I'm starting to doubt if having conscious, introspective mind is worth it. If I were an ancient Greek at least I could hope for uncontrolled, non-introspective flood of the honey 'eidola' at the right time (that is while shopping in ancient supermarkets, of course). But no, my stupid, 21st century mind was distracted with thoughts like: Why on Earth two 250g bags of nuts are cheaper than one 500g bag of the same nuts? That's nuts! (Yep, I'm that infantile and my 40-something-year-old mind made me laugh at this. Again.)

Post by “Cassius” of May 18, 2024 at 9:29 AM

[Quote from TauPhi](#)

I guess making shopping lists wouldn't be the worst idea in the world.

A ha! A major confession! Tau Phi is not a LISTMAKER! 😊

I begin over the years to think that some form of habit of listmaking or outlining is a requirement of being a "good Epicurean!"

Quote

[Letter to Herodotus 36] Indeed it is necessary to go back on the main principles, and constantly to fix in one's memory enough to give one the most essential comprehension of the truth. And in fact the accurate knowledge of details will be fully discovered, if the general principles in the various departments are thoroughly grasped

and borne in mind; for even in the case of one fully initiated the most essential feature in all accurate knowledge is the capacity to make a rapid use of observation and mental apprehension, and this can be done if everything is summed up in elementary principles and formulae. For it is not possible for anyone to abbreviate the complete course through the whole system, if he cannot embrace in his own mind by means of short formulae all that might be set out with accuracy in detail.

Post by “TauPhi” of May 18, 2024 at 9:53 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

A ha! A major confession! Tau Phi is not a LISTMAKER! 😊

I begin over the years to think that some form of habit of listmaking or outlining is a requirement of being a "good Epicurean!"

Haha. I'm caught red-handed. Thank intermundian god I'm not an Epicurean, good or otherwise.

Now, however, I'm fully dedicated to 'Things I Forgot While Shopping' list which probably promotes me to a little more Epicurean but also a little more twisting the knife in my own wound person. I call it a good Saturday.

Post by “Bryan” of May 18, 2024 at 11:21 AM

[Quote from Julia](#)

This might also be why the geometers were so happy to adopt the idea of a plane of ideal forms – they might have experienced such a plane...

Good point! I wanted to add this, (DRN 4.962, Melville translation):

"And those pursuits which most we love to follow, the things in which just now we have been engaged -- the mind being thus the more intent upon them -- these are most often the substance of our dreams. Lawyers argue their cases and make laws, generals fight battles, leading troops to war, sailors pursue their struggles with the wind, and I ply my own task and

seek the nature of things always, and tell them in our native tongue. All other pursuits and arts seem thus in dreams to hold the minds of men with their illusions."

Post by "Martin" of May 19, 2024 at 5:30 AM

Julian Jaynes' "breakdown" of the bicameral mind seems to have been refuted, partly because his evidence from ancient texts is cherry-picked and evidence to the contrary in ancient texts is ignored by him. There are probably more reasons why it is nonsense, but I am not interested to dig deeper into it to find out.

Post by "Julia" of May 19, 2024 at 6:33 AM

You see, the Epicureans were "very wrong about their physics and it has since been refuted" – but the underlying idea of "atoms and void" still holds.[1] Similarly, the geocentric model was wrong, but at least it was a step in the right direction: the Earth isn't flat and the stars aren't hanging from a giant dome above it. Science, as you know, is the social process of finding less-wrong answers 😊

With that in mind: As to the underlying idea, I am not aware of any such evidence to the contrary; in my humble opinion, it can be argued that a mind with introspection can hardly exist for long, if at all, without also holding the concept of introspection inside itself. Further, it is very unlikely that a vast number of people are capable of introspection, do have the mental concept of introspection, but chose to never talk about it – it is absurd to assume they collectively conspired against writing it down, and as such it is reasonable to assume they didn't say it, either. If they didn't say it, why else would that have been other than that the concept was absent from their minds, which in turn implies they didn't have that capability to anywhere near the extent that we commonly take for granted today.

What's more, humans can function quite well without introspection, even in today's society. Only once cognition or even learning itself are impaired does the overall functioning see a rapid decline. And what is probably most surprising to many people nowadays, is that reduced introspection has very serious advantages in a harsh environment.[2]

To put it differently: By offering evidence that the sun must be at the centre of the solar system, one cannot refute the underlying idea of the geocentric model: "Planets are balls circling each other."

[1] To be read benevolently; which is to say: I know even the Bohr model was more refined than that, there's the particle-wave dualism, and all that doesn't even get us started on the quantum physics. None of this genuinely affects the point I'm trying to make, which is to say: At the time, "atoms and void" was less-wrong than anything else, and as such it was the right way forward.

[2] Conjecture on my part: This is why the Stoics tried to emulate some aspects of a non-introspective mind inside of an introspective mind.

Post by "Don" of May 19, 2024 at 7:09 AM

At the risk of going further down the rabbit hole, I would say discussions about "consciousness" depend on how the term itself is defined in the discussion.

It seems to me "consciousness" is on a continuum among all living beings. I'll draw the line at "inanimate" objects having "consciousness."

By defining "consciousness" narrowly or broadly, two speakers using the same word can talk right past each other.

I'll admit that I hadn't heard the term "bicameral mind" before [TauPhi](#)'s post above. In looking at the Wikipedia articles (I know - deep research 😊) it strikes me as similar to the "Ancient Greeks couldn't see 'blue'" arguments because they wrote things like "[wine-dark sea](#)" (or that's how οἶνον πόντος has been traditionally translated; it has been convincingly stated that it doesn't refer to hue but rather to light/dark differentiation or other qualities). It also strikes me as similar to the discredited idea of the "triune brain" (reptile/mammal/human) that Dr. Lisa Feldman Barrett (among others) has done such a good job debunking.

Post by "Julia" of May 19, 2024 at 8:30 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

By defining "consciousness" narrowly or broadly, two speakers using the same word can talk right past each other.

I agree. Choice of words and their respective definition matters a lot here.

[Quote from Don](#)

It also strikes me as similar to the discredited idea of the "triune brain" (reptile/mammal/human) that Dr. Lisa Feldman Barrett (among others) has done such a good job debunking.

Please note I'm not trying to argue from the bottom up (neurons → mental phenomena → behaviour) but I am arguing top down (behaviour → mental phenomena) and I leave the neurons out of the picture entirely; they're still really a black box to us today. Some neuroscientists and science journalists love to make it seem as though we have it all figured out, but in reality we barely understand the first things.

As such, when I say things like "autopilot", I do not envision a literal cluster of neurons acting on its own, bypassing all other processing to directly control the physical limbs. Rather, I am referring to a mental phenomenon, a state of mind.

I have extensive, direct personal experience with a wide range of mentally ill (ill, as in: inherently suffering or inherently causing suffering in others) and mentally divergent (divergent, as in: straying far from the average without suffering inherently caused by it) people, diagnosed with all sorts of things: addiction, depression, acute schizophrenia, severe personality disorders, mental symptoms of neurodevelopmental and neurodegenerative diseases, you name it. With that understanding, please do note my distillate wasn't "Ancient Greeks were Schizophrenics"; instead, what I said was:

[Quote from Julia](#)

In some ways, ancient minds worked considerably different from ours.

Now, am I trying to cop-out? Not really: Regarding Jaynes (whom I didn't bring up), if the very ancient minds (Homer, not Epicurus) were schizophrenics, there would have been chaos, and it doesn't make sense in several other ways. However, this doesn't negate the underlying idea that they were somehow qualitatively different from us. If I were forced to put a single word to it, I'd say very ancient minds were dissociative (which implies being much-less introspective, and is a sort of "geocentric vs solarcentric" distinction, when before the assumption was a flat earth). However, dissociation is quite hard to grasp for laypeople, requires rather verbose

explanations (because it is so foreign from common everyday experience); by using only a single word, it is necessarily a simplification, and as such in turn easily gives rise to half-true analogies and half-true associations to fill the gaps. That is why I prefer the qualitative description of “their minds worked quite differently from ours” (unless I'm talking to someone well-versed in psychology lingo to begin with *and* who knows how I define my terms) and try to illustrate it by saying “they might have actually heard ‘muses’ speak to them” – but weren't able to conceive of them as originating from their own brains (that would be akin to introspection), nor did they consider them to be as real as the ground they stand on (that would be akin to schizophrenia), instead they speak of “divine afflatus” or other things along the lines of new-age “channelling” in a similarly casual way as they speak of dreams – that is in itself noteworthy. Furthermore, a very similar oddity occurs in dissociative humans, who lack cultural input to develop better concepts (or have been fed false ones). With nature deities (thunder gods, ...) being an accepted part of everyday life, it would be much less outlandish for contemporaries of Homer to think of ‘muses’ speaking to them, than to think of the voice they hear as originating from ‘another self residing besides them inside the same brain’, an accurate description some, even today, erroneously consider outlandish. During Epicurus' time, this would have been in the process of changing for quite a while, with presumably low-ranking slaves lacking behind and the relatively rich and wealthy (such as, for the most part, our philosophers) leading in the development.

(For those who this is intriguing to: In response to recent changes in modern day society, mostly the ubiquitous internet access, a weird wave of collective mental shifts is currently happening in the Empty Spaces (no, not the Pink Floyd song 😊), leaving people increasingly disengendered, disembodied, and ultimately dehumanised; oddly enough, it doesn't appear to inherently cause any suffering. Personally, I've put this phenomenon on my watch list for the coming decades.)

I'm not entirely sure this offers more answers as it raises questions, but having typed all this makes me want to hit [Reply] so here we go 😊

Post by “Cassius” of May 19, 2024 at 8:53 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

I'll admit that I hadn't heard the term "bicameral mind" before

A lot of this discussion is entirely new to me to, so I have little comment at least at this point. I am glad we have intelligent people who can bring things like this to our attention.

Post by “Julia” of May 19, 2024 at 11:17 AM

Quote from Lucretius in Book Four, Browne 1743 edition, section leading up to Latin Line 906

And now attend, and you shall know how it is that we are able to walk when we will, that we have a power to move our limbs as we please, and what it is that thrusts the body forward with all its weight. I say then, that the **images of motion first affect and strike the mind**, as we observed before. **This makes the Will, for we never attempt to do any thing before the mind knows what it is we desire to do**, and the image of that thing which occurs to the mind must be present before it. **And thus the mind, having moved itself so as to resolve to go forward, strikes immediately upon the soul, which is diffused through the whole body**, and this is easily done, because they are both closely joined together. **The soul then strikes the body, and so the whole bulk by degrees is thrust forward and put into motion**. Besides, the body by this means is rarefied, and the air, which is ever disposed to move, enters the open passages, and pierces through the pores in great abundance, and so is dispersed through every minute part of the body. By these two therefore (by the soul laboring within, and by the air entering from without) the body is moved, as a ship is by oars and wind. Nor is this at all strange, that particles so very small should turn about the bulk of our bodies, and move so great a weight; for the driving wind, formed of so fine and subtle seeds, thrust forward a large ship with mighty force, and one hand can govern it under full sail, by turning one little helm which way it pleases; and an engine with small labor is able, by pulleys and wheels, to move many bodies of a great weight.

In response to this, Elayne said:

Quote from Elayne in Episode 059, starting 12:32 (cleaned transcription, eg no particles and markers (no “ahem”, ...)):

Because Lucretius had to give an explanation for imagination – dreams, “How do we come with that stuff that's not actually in front of us?” – and he said that it was because **there were images that we weren't seeing with our eyes**, but were penetrating through the skin, **and we were perceiving them with our mind, rather than the brain itself being creative**. So it does make sense that, if you thought that, you would not think that you could imagine a motivation to move: How would you know how you wanted to move, in his model, if you weren't presented with an image beforehand, because you're not... — last week we talked about the memory being more of like a pattern, storing not an actual image. He doesn't have that in his model at all,

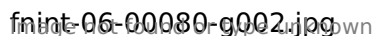
so this has got to come from outside! And so then we're surrounded by all these images of moving, that I guess **the mind would decide to focus on something moving, and that would give it an understanding of what to do, and then it would decide to move!** – Really, really fascinating idea. Not how it works, but cool.

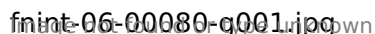
What Lucretius describes *casually* as a mental phenomenon seems *unusual* to Elayne, and indeed would to most present-day people. However, I am not aware of any of Lucretius' contemporaries taking offense *at the phenomenon* he describes – only *the explanation of it* was disputed.

The explanation of floating images – however wrong from today's perspective – should be credited for, at the time, being less-wrong than supernatural alternatives. Within the Epicurean physics, the explanation seems logical, natural, and standing-to-reason. Let's compare it with the “columns of air” which pass through the eyeball and allows us to tell how far away things are – how weird is that from our perspective?! Yet, it didn't bring about much controversy, because it fits well within the Epicurean physics. In the same way, this explanation fits. It shouldn't raise any eyebrow. It isn't the *explanation* that causes the feeling that “something is going on in this passage”, it is the *mental phenomenon* that causes this.

In the quotes above, I have highlighted the inner mental processes, and left out the underlying explanation. *If you read only the highlighted text in both statements, you end up reading a perfect description of one aspect – that of physical movement – in what we today would call dissociative humans.* There is not a thing that's odd or wrong about it, except, of course, Lucretius' explanation for it – and the fact that most present-day humans do not have this experience anymore.

I'm not in the mood to manually, bit by bit dissect the entire extant writings from Homer's pre-pre-Socratic society to the post-Roman not-yet-dark-ages society in this manner. However, I have yet to come across a single passage which makes me question my assertion, what I said here is entirely in line with the numeric, empirical evidence offered by the team Mariano Sigman (the guy from the TED talk) published with,[1] and I am not currently aware of any substantiated contradictions...

fnint-06-00080-g002.jpg

fnint-06-00080-g001.jpg

(Both images licensed under [CC BY 3.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/) by Diuk CG, Slezak DF, Raskovsky I, Sigman M and Cecchi GA (2012) in A quantitative philology of introspection. Published in *Front. Integr. Neurosci.* 6:80. doi: 10.3389/fnint.2012.00080).

So I concur with Elayne, when she says:

Quote from Episode 059, starting 24:55, cleaned transcription

Cassius: "What is a thought then?"

Elayne: "[Lucretius] is separating it in a way that is real hard for us to imagine, but I guess it would be... [...] He apparently thought about how the brain works very, very differently from either how we experience it or how we are able to understand it currently. It's really, really different. And I don't think we should gloss over the rather extreme differences in that model, just to try to squeeze him into what we have now. That is a real difference."

and I'd stress it is important to not get distracted by Lucretius' outdated explanations and instead appreciate the qualitative difference of the inner experiences he is describing from the experiences common to most people today, and to appreciate how much he takes for granted that his audience shares his experiences qualitatively.

[1] Original Research: <https://doi.org/10.3389/fnint.2012.00080>

Post by "Julia" of May 19, 2024 at 1:43 PM

Basically, that research agrees with Cassius' observation

Quote from Cassius in Episode 059 starting 30:12 (cleaned transcription)

There's not a lot of discussion of consciousness, or words that today we tend to use as describing the ego or whatever the word you want to use to describe the 'you', the ultimate 'you' [...]

In light of so much philosophising, the only way I can think of for that to not be surprising is to think of minds with limited introspection, minds which cannot as easily refer to *their self* as they can refer to *themselves*... 😊

Post by "Don" of May 19, 2024 at 1:45 PM

I'm looking forward to looking through that paper at the link.

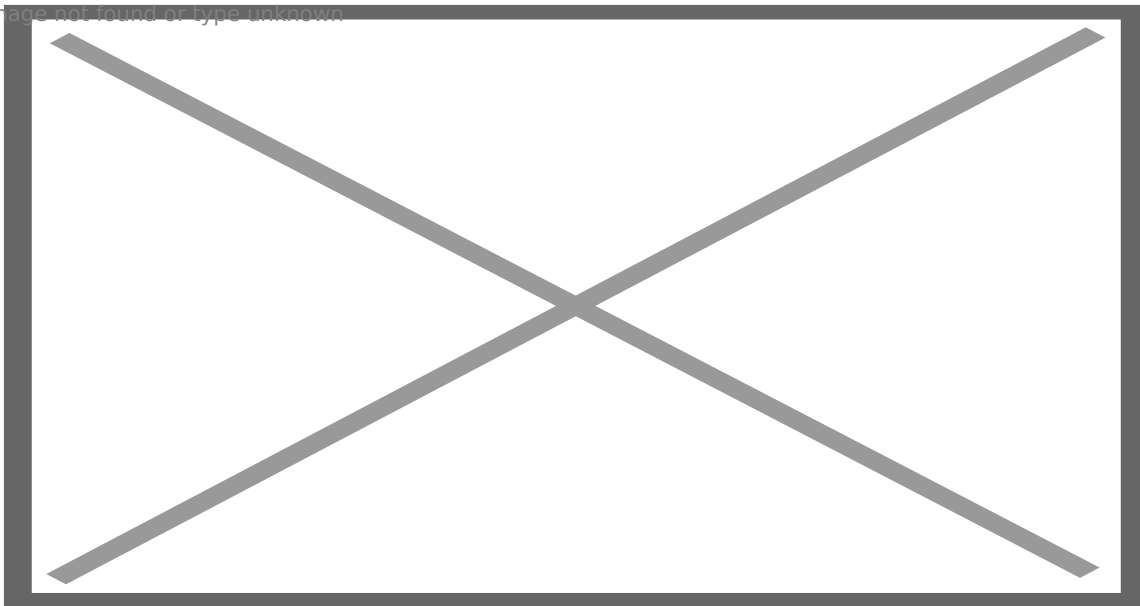
Talk of ancient human brains or minds being qualitatively different from later human brains/minds always makes me a little uneasy. I'm skeptical of them being qualitatively different but rather merely being lacking in the quantity of information available to them. I may be misremembering, but I think Gilgamesh was moved by the death of Enkidu and the subsequent thinking about his own mortality that drove him to seek out the secret to immortality.

But I am curious how the paper ran its analysis and came to their conclusions.

Fascinating topic!

Post by “Don” of May 19, 2024 at 2:27 PM

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[The History And Science Of How We Talk To Ourselves](#)

Hearing voices is often associated with mental illness. A British psychologist says this is a misunderstanding. He argues internal voices are actually the...

dianerehm.org

I haven't had a chance to read this or listen to the audio, but thought it could be relevant to the conversation.

Post by “Bryan” of May 19, 2024 at 3:15 PM

Hello [Julia](#), thank you for this input. I am almost completely ignorant regarding modern psychology. Before I read these posts again, I wanted to ask:

Given that the "changes in thinking" over the years are mostly due to cultural changes rather than physical changes -- if my forefather 2,000 years ago was raised in a similar cultural context that I grew up in (let's say we were both raised in a small, close-knit, and mostly isolated community with no television and no modern education) then it seems to me that he and I would have a strong tendency to have a similar way of thinking -- would you agree?

Post by “Julia” of May 19, 2024 at 9:13 PM

The answer to that isn't obvious and I'd claim nobody fully knows. Here's a start:

- Around five generations after once crossing-in a wild animal into a pet breed, the offspring will usually be considered a “pet” again. After 20 generations (of selecting only tamest specimen to continue breeding) around a third of foxes are domesticated to a dog-like level, after 30 generations 3 of 4 will be dog-like. Women in Athens married at the age of around 14, women in Sparta around the age of 20. Even when we're generous and award 30 years per generation, that still makes 66 generations in the past 2000 years, or more than twice the generations needed to turn wild foxes into pet-like, dog-like creatures. To sum up: Both the genetic and epigenetic influence on the psyche could be quite considerable over such a long time. (Yes, "quite considerable" is vague, but it's hard to put a number on it: How about “100 Standard Considerability Units”? Is that a lot? Well, it is certainly considerable! 😊).
- The condition of the mother, the gestational environment plays a role in later development.
- Microbiome and nutrition play a major role, both [short](#) and [long](#) term.
- Apart from nature (genetics, ...), experiences are also culturally inherited (nurture).
- Early experiences (especially up to the first beginnings of puberty) play an especially big role.
- [Language itself](#) is an important factor (think of [Newspeak](#), the influence of propaganda, the influence of framing, how different cultures view things differently).

With so many variables at play, what are the chances that you would, in fact, still “have a strong tendency to have a similar way of thinking”? What's more, the ancient times were comparatively violent, and transgenerational trauma transmission is strong: “Researchers

typically find an intergenerational transmission rate [of Intimate Partner Violence and Child Maltreatment] of 30%", says the APSAC Handbook On Child Maltreatment (page 172 of the 2011 version; a bit outdated, but not much will have changed with that number, because this topic has been actively researched since at least the early 1980s). Even nightmares of traumatic events are passed on somehow.[1]

At any one time, around 0,3% of the general population is affected by schizophrenia. This makes it one of the rarer mental disorders, which isn't very surprising, because it is very detrimental to survival, not just of that one individual, but of the entire hunter-gatherer tribe.[2] Schizophrenic delusions are characterised by hyper-meaning, by seeing meanings in meaningless things, by seeing associations between unrelated things: "Why did you take two sugars - Julia only takes one sugar with her tea! Who are you and what have you done to my friend?!" It is also characterised by impaired reality-testing (lack of asking oneself: "Is what I just thought even possible physically, logically and realistically?"). You can imagine it quite like living in a nightmare, in which you are paranoid and your mind connects unrelated things to scare you. However, the ancient Greeks and Romans weren't erratic, delusional and irrational. Neither were they floridly schizophrenic, nor did they suffer the negative symptoms of schizophrenia: a deep emptiness, in which "everything is missing" (lack of will, speech, emotion, desires, ...).

Another feature commonly thought of in the context of schizophrenia is "hearing voices": some (but not all) schizophrenics hear voices, which - and this is important - they localise as coming from the outside world[3] and which transport irrational, delusional contents/commands. These are called Schneiderian first-rank symptoms. The ancient texts tell us about voices, but those voices aren't irrational or delusional. Those voices do influence the person hearing them, but they don't effectively remote-control that person, even injecting new thoughts or erasing their own thoughts (which is quite possible in acute schizophrenia). The ancient texts also hint sometimes that those voices appear as a 4th category of their own: 1. voices of other humans, 2. the voice of one's own thoughts, 3. voices imagined in the mind's ear (auralisation; like pictures imagined in the mind's eye (visualisation)), and 4. voices which are not of other humans, not one's own thoughts, and not one's own imagined sounds, but which "appear in the mind somehow". Such voices are consistent with and common in highly dissociative people.

Above 1% of the current general population is persistently(!) highly dissociative (three to four times more than are schizophrenic), and this number increases rapidly with traumatic experiences - to rephrase: it increases rapidly the more unpredictable and stressful the environment is. Even temporarily living in such an environment before the age of approximately eight can (but doesn't have to) lead to being persistently highly dissociative throughout adulthood.

I cannot quite imagine life in Ancient Greece - if I was born then, it would all be normal to me, so would I still consider certain things unsettling? Probably not? But perhaps more importantly: Why would I not consider those things unsettling anymore? What psychological measures would

my mind take to remain so unfazed? Who is to say I might not, in fact, be dissociative and consequently “hear the muses”? (Similarly, what most people today experience as “being torn between two choices/positions/points of view” can present itself as quite literally an “inner argument” in dissociation.)

Let's contrast modern Western life with that in ancient times: Plutarch claims that Spartans would have cherry-picked babies, leaving those who appear weak to die. Even if that's exaggerated, it does set a certain stage. Spartans were explicitly raised to negate their personal boundaries entirely: their selves and their lives were nothing, Sparta was everything. Boys had to attend the agoge, a kind of primary and secondary school and military boot camp rolled into one. Bullying was encouraged, and the ritual whipping (the diamastigosis at the Sanctuary of Artemis Orthia) of teenage boys was a very bloody affair. Being a woman, I wouldn't have been sent to the agoge. However, what we today consider rape is common in the existing texts, even the “heroes” do it, the treatment of slaves was frequently transgressive, wars were common and routinely resulted in raping of women and children – and with all this going on, what it does to the victims is practically never mentioned at all. This either shows the men (our kind writers) did not consider it worth mentioning or it means the women did not consider it that bad – in either case, that points to a very different way of thinking, a different way of functioning even, and is hardly compatible with the idea that they were “just like we are today.” To me, these and many other things – gladiator fights, human sacrifices, the brutal punishments exerted “for justice” – offer a glimpse towards a world which, for all its science, art and beauty, also contained an unimaginable amount of violence. Did children, in that world, routinely grow up with secure attachments, with warmth, being cared for mindfully, having their personal boundaries respected?[4] Was that world consistently comprehensible (predictable), manageable (non-overwhelming) and meaningful (pleasurable) to the children growing up in it? Somehow, I cannot quite imagine that.

Seeing one's brother or best friend ritually flogged to death at an altar laden with cheese (diamastigosis), while many visitors are present watching the spectacle – that in itself could hardly pass modern teenagers by without leaving a mark. So why should their minds still function “qualitatively the same”?

[1] This appears to be a quite readable introduction to that topic: <https://doctorsonly.co.il/wp-content/upl...ransmission.pdf>

[2] This might be why humans instinctively try to exclude the overly eccentric (“If she does that, who knows what else she might do, she might accidentally call the sabre-tooth tigers to our cave!”).

[3] Stereo recordings are typically mastered such that, when listening to two speakers around three metres away and turned by about 30 degrees, a nice stage can be imagined. (A song with a particularly wide stereo field is the Beatles' [Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band](#), but I digress.) When listening with headphones the stage is no longer imagine in front of oneself, and instead is located “behind the eyes” and the music plays “inside your head”, because the binaural crossfeed is missing: the brain requires certain naturally occurring acoustic effects, which alter the sound heard by both ears, to compute the location of the sound source. When both ears hear *exactly* the same (something which can only be achieved with modern day headphones), an unnatural edge case occurs, and the brain's sonar module locates those sounds “inside the head”. This topic is somewhat analogous to stereoscopic vision (3D vision) requiring consistent-but-different input from both eyes (minor change in viewing angle): next time you play catch or frisbee, close one eye and see how well you do.

[4] Someone might object that this is asking too much, that to raise children like this sets the bar too highly; however, I'd argue that even in a hunter-gatherer situation children were with their parents or immediate family almost all of the time, knew their place (in the group hierarchy), had secure attachments, were not subject to any grotesque and violent cultural practises, and as such I see no obvious reason why their personal boundaries would have been arbitrarily, needlessly ignored; so with some luck, the only unpredictable elements in their life were the weather and predatory animals – but not other humans. (Fossils show hunter-gatherers attacked each other, but that probably wasn't the norm, and I be surprised to learn their culture included arbitrary and pointless violence inside a tribe – they couldn't afford such waste.) To be more direct: Why would a hunter-gatherer have beaten their children? Why would they have neglected them? Even chimpanzees can literally rip an arm out of another species of ape they just killed in one moment, and peacefully cuddle and delouse their offspring the next moment. Compare that with the many artificial celebrations of violence in the ancient Greco-Roman world – whose childhood would be less overwhelming and less unpredictable? I don't know, but I can easily imagine that growing up 2000 years ago was no piece of cake, in which case those minds would have naturally developed their full psychological defensive capabilities, they would have been well-versed in dissociation, which is a natural, adaptive and powerful human capability lost in most modern humans – quite like vision remains lost if raised in darkness until a certain age ([critical period](#)).

Post by “Julia” of May 19, 2024 at 9:51 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

<https://dianerehm.org/shows/2016-11-...lk-to-ourselves>

It is important to distinguish [fictive heterodialogues](#) (recall my initial post in this thread) from hearing other selves in high dissociation; while both can be thought of as existing in different places on a spectrum (mere quantitative difference) in *some* particular regards, it shouldn't be glossed over that they're also qualitatively different in a number of ways. It is also important to distinguish the voices heard in delusions, as I've just done with a focus on schizophrenia.

What happens in this show is what still happens all too often: There are only the voices labelled #1 through #3 (see above[1]) - and then there's schizophrenia. What is entirely missing is a proper delineation of dissociative voices (#4 above); if they get mentioned at all, they either get erroneously conflated with the voices heard in schizophrenia, or with the voices heard in so-called "normal"[2] inner dialogue. In my opinion, this oversight is why the topic keeps getting circled without being grasped. Florid schizophrenia is hard to overlook, "normality" is hard to overlook - at the same time, trauma makes people uncomfortable to begin with, trying to research it will ring all kinds of ethical alarm bells, and of course, there is very little money for that type of work.[3]

[1] I made those numbers up to have an easier time referencing things; their order is arbitrary.

[2] There's nothing inherently abnormal about dissociative voices, they're just uncommon now, because we live in exceptionally peaceful, safe and predictable environments.

[3] It's not very attractive to donors, it doesn't make for as good a PR stunt as the children's cancer ward (which doesn't imply I'd want to take any of their care away; I'd give more to both 😊).